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ABSTRACT

Increasingly, foreign nationals living in Japan are sending their children to Japanese elementary schools. This requires that the children's native language be taught outside of school, most often at home. While teaching oral language is not difficult for parents, teaching reading requires different skills. Some difficulties in this process are inherent in the language differences: use of letters vs. ideographs; letter-sound correspondence; clear boundaries between words; and the structure of printed language. Parents planning to teach their children English readings skills should familiarize themselves with three major teaching techniques for reading: phonics, "look-say," and the whole language approach. A survey of 22 English-speaking parents in Japan who taught their children to read English in this context reveals how family home language use and the structure and materials of reading lessons correlate with reading achievement, and shows that parental determination is a significant factor in child reading achievement. General principles for effective teaching include: daily reading; tailoring teaching style to the child's needs; teaching writing alongside reading; and positive reinforcement. Motivating activities are also useful. Sources for instructional materials are listed. Contains 29 references. (MSE)

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Monographs on Bilingualism No. 4

Adding Biliteracy to Bilingualism: Teaching Your Child to Read English in Japan

日本の小学校に通っているJ-Eバイリンガルの子に英語の読み書きを教えるに当たって

A Guide for Parents

by Mary Goebel Noguchi

親のためのガイドブック

野口メアリー・ゲイブル著

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日本に住んでいる英語を母語とする外国人の子供は、日本語と英語の両方をしゃべる事さえ簡単ではないのに、両方の読み書きまでできることは、果たして可能でしょうか。

この小冊子は、まず、先端のバイリンガル研究を生かして、バイリテラシー（二ヵ国語の読み書き能力）の意義を説きます。そして、自分の子供をバイリテレットにしたいと思っている英語を母語とする外国人の親に、具体的な援助をします。英語の読み書きについての研究に言及しながら、それを学ぶ際の難点、アメリカで一般的になっている教え方に関する議論などを詳細に説明します。次に、日本に暮らしながら、自分のバイリガルの子供に英語の読み書きを教えた経験のある外国人の調査結果を使って、どんな親、どんな子、どんな教え方が効果的だったかを分析します。その後、読み書きを教えるに当たっての一般的原則を述べてから、調査した親の様々な工夫とアドバイスを伝えます。最後に、アメリカの代表的な教材の出版社の名前と住所のリストを掲載しています。つまり、J-Eバイリンガルの子供をもつ外国人の親のためのバイリテラシー・ガイドブックを目指しています。

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Chapter I: A Growing Need

The (Potentially) Bilingual Population

One result of Japan's emergence as an economic superpower has been a dramatic change in the size and character of the foreign community in the country. As late as the mid-seventies, the Western foreign community was for the most part composed of Christian missionaries, business executives and current or former members of the American military. Asian foreign residents, on the other hand, were generally Koreans and Chinese who had been brought to Japan as forced laborers before the Second World War, or the descendants of such compulsory immigrants.

As the nation's economy expanded, however, these small, fairly stable communities gave way to new waves of settlers. With the growth of Japan's export economy, demand rose for foreign language teachers, copywriters and translators, particularly those whose native language was English. And as the country moved into the international limelight, there was a great influx of young people coming from the West to explore Japanese culture, especially the Japanese way of doing business.

Meanwhile, in its role as a leading industrial power, Japan began accepting a limited number of refugees from Vietnam and Cambodia. The country opened its schools to more foreign students, so that by the end of 1991, there were 48,715 foreign students enrolled at universities and colleges in the country, and 35,595 others studying at Japanese-language and vocational schools.[1]

Moreover, women from the Philippines and Thailand have been brought into the country as "entertainers" (often a cover for prostitution), and, in the case of the Philippines, as brides for farmers in areas that are rapidly losing their population of young people, especially women.

Furthermore, when an economic boom began in 1986, Japan faced a severe shortage of labor, most noticeably in industries where work is "difficult, dirty, or dangerous" and thus considered undesirable by affluent young Japanese. To expand the labor pool, the government began encouraging the "repatriation" of foreigners of Japanese ancestry. By mid 1992, there were over 143,000 *Nikkeijin* working in factories in Japan, 120,000 of them from Brazil.[2] Foreign students were also encouraged to stay on and work in Japan. In 1991, Japanese companies hired 1,117 foreign students; this represented a 10 percent increase from the previous year and 2.7 times the number hired in 1986[3]. The government also turned a blind eye to a growing tide of illegal laborers from Pakistan, Iran and other Asian countries. By November, 1991, the Labor Ministry estimated that there were 210,000 illegal foreign workers in the country.[4]

As the foreign community thus expanded and diversified, methods of educating its children also changed. The stabler early communities tended to establish their own schools: "international," mission, and Korean schools, as well as schools for dependents of members of the American armed forces. Many of the new immigrants, however, began sending their children to Japanese schools. One of the reasons for this trend is that many of the newer

residents do not live in or near the old foreign enclaves, which are concentrated in such port cities as Tokyo, Yokohama and Kobe. The teaching positions, hostess clubs, farm families and construction jobs that attract new immigrants are scattered throughout the country. Nor do many of the new settlers fit into the traditional groups: often they are not strong Christians or Koreans or members of the American military.

Moreover, where missionaries and business executives may receive stipends to send their children to international schools, expatriates who come to this country as individuals have to pay the tuition for such institutions on their own - and the costs are astronomical. In the Kansai area, for example, annual fees for the Canadian Academy in Kobe are over a million yen per child per year for kindergarten through fifth grade and soar to ¥1,240,000 annually for grades six through twelve. The less well-equipped Kyoto International School charges ¥820,000 annual tuition plus a materials and building fee of ¥170,000 and a registration fee of ¥100,000, though it does give a discount (¥123,000) for siblings attending the school. Even the Spartan 33-student Kansai Christian School in Ikoma charges children of parents who are not Christian missionaries ¥606,000 per pupil per year for elementary school (grades 1 - 6) and ¥732,000 for junior and senior high school. In contrast, fees for public Japanese elementary schools are well under ten thousand yen monthly, including books and school lunches.

Not only are the traditional schools of the foreign community often inaccessible, unattractive, and/or not affordable to many of the new immigrants, but also the Japanese educational system has gained international acclaim. Comparative scholastic tests have shown that Japanese students outperform many of their peers in other countries. Starting in the early 1980s, reports in American newspapers and magazines lauded the high standard of education available in Japanese public schools. Books such as *The Japanese Educational Challenge* by Merry White, Associate Professor at Boston University, also provided a detailed, balanced view of Japanese education.

Japanese schools are therefore seen as more attractive in and of themselves. A survey taken by the Association of Foreign Wives of Japanese (AFWJ) in 1990 showed that 88% of the mothers in the group preferred to send their children to Japanese elementary schools, while only 8% chose international elementary schools and 4% preferred other types of schools.[5]

For these reasons, an increasing number of foreign residents have begun sending their children to Japanese schools. While there are no accurate figures on the number of children of foreign residents in Japan (since many foreign residents are married to Japanese and their children therefore have Japanese citizenship), a survey taken by the Ministry of Education in September 1993 reported that the number of foreign students who were attending Japanese public elementary and junior high schools and required Japanese language instruction had almost doubled in the past two years, reaching 10,450. These students were dispersed at 3,705 schools distributed throughout all of the nation's prefectures.[6] Since this report covers only pupils who have recently immigrated and need Japanese language instruction, it can be assumed that the actual number of children of

foreign residents attending Japanese schools is many times the figure given in the report.

By sending their children to Japanese schools, foreign residents can be sure that they will learn the Japanese language. However, many also want their children to learn the language of their native country. For some parents, this desire stems from a wish for greater emotional closeness with their children, especially if the parents themselves are not fluent in Japanese. Many also want their children to be able to communicate with relatives in their native country. Others may envision an eventual return to their native country and want their children prepared for the transition. Some may hope to make it possible for their children to attend college in their own country in case they cannot get into a good university in Japan or do not want to endure the stiff competition involved in college entrance in this country. Still others wish to share their culture with their children.

Teaching the Parents' Native Language

If their children are attending a Japanese school, however, the parents' native tongue must be taught outside of school. In cases where a number of parents from the same country live near each other, language instruction can be carried out in supplementary classes known as "Saturday Schools." For example, a group of English-speaking parents in Tsukuba established weekly English classes for seven children in 1988[7]. Also, in Kanagawa Prefecture, a group of about 30 children and four volunteer teachers hold Vietnamese language classes twice a month at the Fujisawa Catholic Church.[8]

However, many of the new immigrants do not live near people from their own country - a fact that can be surmised from the Ministry of Education's statistics on the large number (3,705) of public schools at which foreign students who require Japanese language lessons are enrolled. Thus, if these foreign residents want their children to learn their native tongue, they have to teach it to their children themselves. This is not as easy a task as might be surmised.

Much of the research on bilingualism to date has involved European languages, where the similarities in script, sentence structure and vocabulary presumably facilitate the learning of two languages. However, there has been some research on the difficulties of raising children bilingually in Japan, where, if the outside language is European, the difference between languages would be far greater.

Masayo Yamamoto has conducted two surveys of language use in families in which one of the parents is a native speaker of English and the other a native speaker of Japanese (Yamamoto, 1987, 1992). In the first survey, which was taken in 1985, Yamamoto found that while 62 percent of English-speaking parents almost always used only or mainly English to communicate with their children, only 31 percent of the children spoke to them exclusively or almost exclusively in English. In contrast, she found that while 62 percent of the Japanese-speaking parents almost always spoke in Japanese with their children, 69 percent of their children spoke to them mainly in Japanese. The results of the second survey confirmed these findings. Thus, Yamamoto concludes:

> Intuitively, it seems that parents of different linguistic backgrounds should be able to raise bilingual children naturally, or at least rather easily and painlessly. However, the truth is that it is not so.

It should be noted that English, the outside language considered in Yamamoto's study, is highly valorized in Japan. The ability to speak English is often associated with such attractive characteristics as international-mindedness, a good educational background and strong career prospects. Moreover, Japanese society as a whole supports the study of English. A foreign language must be studied in junior and senior high schools, and in most of these schools, both public and private, as well as in most colleges in the country, the language selected is English. Books written in English, as well as music and movies featuring English soundtracks are readily available at stores throughout the country. In addition, TV programs such as "Sesame Street" and foreign movies are broadcast bilingually.

Yet Yamamoto's study shows that despite all this social support for the learning of English, it is difficult to raise a child to speak both English and Japanese in Japan, even when one of the parents is a native speaker of English. We can only conclude that it would be even more difficult for foreign parents to teach their children their native language if that language is not English.

The Rationale for Biliteracy

If it is difficult to teach a child to *speak* a language not used by the community where one resides, it can be imagined that it is a Sisyphean task to teach the child to *read* the outside language. Yet, as pointed out by George Saunders in his book *Bilingual Children: From Birth to Teens*,

> Children tend to regard a language which they can speak but not read as not being equal to the language of the school which can be used for all functions. (p. 198)

Saunders notes that

> . . . it is psychologically important for children to be aware that their parents' language is also, like the majority language, a fully-fledged medium of communication, with its own literature, its own writing conventions, etc. (p. 198)

Moreover, a wealth of data supporting biliteracy has been gathered in recent years. Jim Cummins, internationally renowned for his studies of bilingualism, provides a comprehensive survey of research on the effects of first-language proficiency on second-language acquisition in "Interdependence of first- and second-language proficiency in bilingual children" (Cummins, 1991). As he notes, the Skutnab-Kangas and Toukomaa report (1976) shows that children of Finnish immigrants in Sweden who have attended school in Finland before coming to Sweden scored close to native-speaking children on a written comprehension test, while

those who had little or no schooling in Finnish scored much lower. He also reports on a number of studies that showed significant correlations between Spanish and English reading skills among Hispanic students in the United States. He goes on to cite studies that support Genesee's findings (1979) that although correlations between first and second language reading skills tend to be lower when the writing systems of the two languages are very different (as are the scripts of English, Chinese, Japanese and other Asian languages), they are still significant. Thus, in the case of children who become bilingual consecutively, research suggests that reading proficiency in the first language transfers to some degree to reading proficiency in the second.

Sue Wright of Aston University, Birmingham, U.K., conducted a survey that is even more interesting in its implications on the effects of biliteracy for simultaneous bilinguals. In a study of four hundred 16 - 19 year-old South Asian bilinguals in Birmingham, she found that students who spoke the minority language in a wide variety of situations outside the classroom were generally in lower level courses, achieved lower test results and earned lower grades than students who did not use the minority language as much. However, these results were reversed when reading skills were taken into account. For those who knew how to read and write their home language, the more they used that language outside school, the more likely they were to be in higher level courses, achieve higher test results and earn higher grades. Although Wright does not claim that these findings are conclusive, she suggests that quite possibly, "the key variable" between additive and subtractive bilingualism is the acquisition of literacy in both languages (Wright, 1993).

Furthermore, research on the difference in achievement of immigrants in English "submersion" programs and bilingual programs suggests that it is not enough simply to have learned basic literary skills in the first language: minority-language students generally need long-term support for their home language to ensure academic success. (For a more thorough discussion of the issues involved, see Genesee [1987].)

Thus, there is mounting evidence that biliteracy is not only an important support for bilingualism, but that it can make a critical difference in the academic achievement of a bilingual child.

This monograph was therefore designed to help one group of foreign parents in Japan offer their children the benefits of biliteracy in addition to bilingualism. Although the new immigrant population is quite diverse, for practical reasons the focus is limited to Japanese-English bilinguals, with the information meant to serve as a guide for native speakers of English whose children are attending Japanese schools. To this end, the monograph presents research findings on the problems involved in and recommended methodology for teaching children to read English, as well as information gleaned from a survey of parents whose native language was English and who tried to teach their own children to read English in Japan.

Notes

(1) According to statistics from the Justice Ministry, quoted in "Firms hiring more foreign students," *Japan Times*, September 22, 1992.

(2) "Foreigners get a frosty welcome," by Elaine Kurtenbach, *Japan Times*, September 8, 1992, p. 3.

(3) According to statistics from the Justice Ministry, quoted in "Firms hiring more foreign students," *Japan Times*, September 22, 1992.

(4) Reported in "Labor shortage fuels illegal worker inflow," *Japan Times*, July 1, 1992, p. 2.

(5) As reported in "Foreign cross-cultural moms prefer Japanese schools for their children," by Lorna Moon, *Japan Times*, March 31, 1991, p. 12.

(6) As reported in "日本語教育必要な子一万人," 京都新聞 (*Kyoto Shimbun*), December 26, 1993.

(7) As reported by Martin E. Pauly, Associate Professor at Tsukuba College of Technology, Division for the Visually Impaired, in "From Playgroup to 'Saturday School'," part of the Colloquium on Bilingualism at the 17th Annual JALT International Conference on Language Teaching /Learning (JALT '91).

(8) "Refugees' kids learn Vietnamese," by Mari Koseki, *Japan Times*, December 24, 1991, p. 3.

Chapter II: The Impossible Dream?

While the growing corpus of research on biliteracy may convince parents of bilinguals that their children should learn to read the minority language, it will not show them how this can be done. The biggest problem may well lie in deciding who should teach the children. Parents who do not have easy access to an "international school", or who cannot afford to send their children to one, may reach the conclusion that they themselves are the only potential tutors for their children. And therein lies the rub.

Teaching one's own children to read can seem overwhelming - perhaps even a bit unnatural. Although it's quite common to teach one's children to speak - everybody all over the world does it all the time - teaching reading is another matter entirely, an undertaking one normally delegates to trained professionals in a school system. The task may seem daunting even to those who make their living as language teachers. For it presents a number of new challenges.

First of all, there are the questions that arise from the difference between teaching students in a school and teaching one's own children at home. How does one manage the change of roles, switching from a loving nurturer to an authoritarian disciplinarian before a very skeptical audience - one inclined to test the teacher's limits at all times? How far can one push one's own child without destroying the comfort of the home?

Even if such tensions could be overcome, there would also be the challenge of teaching the concept of reading. Where does one start? How does one go about it?

Such concerns cannot be dismissed out of hand. A wide range of experts discourage parents from trying to teach their children academic subjects. Dr. Benjamin Spock, in his famous work *Baby and Child Care* states,

> Too often parents make poor tutors, not because they don't know enough, not because they don't try hard enough, but because they care too much, are too upset when their child doesn't understand. (p. 452).

More alarming, one of the mothers who completed the questionnaire in a survey I took in 1990 (explained below) wrote, ". . . the home school program said, 'Whatever you do, *don't* teach reading.'"

Despite such dire warnings and the immense challenges of the task, however, I have found a source of great encouragement. In 1990, in an effort to gain more information on the subject, I conducted a survey of English-speaking parents who had tried to teach their children to read in Japan. Despite very limited contacts, I managed to locate 22 parents who were able to teach a total of 40 children to read English. Although the levels of proficiency achieved varied greatly, and while some of the children had the benefit of a year or two of schooling in North America or were being home-schooled exclusively in English, among these 40 children were nine who were taught to read English solely in Japan while attending Japanese schools and were not only bilingual, but literate to a very high degree in both Japanese and English. In all, 32 of the 40 children had learned to read English sentences, and 23 of those 32 had been taught without ever having attended an English-medium elementary or junior high school. Other children, including seven who were six years old or younger, had learned basic deciphering skills.

Thus, I feel I can safely say that biliteracy for English-Japanese bilinguals living in Japan is not an impossible dream. It *is* possible to teach your children to read English while they are attending Japanese schools. In the remainder of this monograph, I will introduce research on the problems involved in this task, discuss the debate on methodologies, and then move on to the above-mentioned survey, analyzing the results in detail. Finally, I will discuss possible teaching materials and techniques using information gleaned from parents in the survey as well as from my own experience in teaching my daughter to read - building on the lessons I had learned from the research and the survey.

Chapter III: Teaching the Concept of Reading

Probably the most difficult thing about teaching a child to read - in any language, it might be presumed - is getting the child to see "how print works." Grasping the concept of reading involves understanding the fact that the markings we call letters have specific, discernible patterns and that they are directly related to the language used in speaking.

Although research in this field is relatively new, Jana M. Mason, in the chapter entitled "Early Reading from a Developmental Perspective" in the *Handbook of Reading Research* (1984), explains three characteristics of language that are woven into children's comprehension of reading. These are:

1) the function of print,
2) the form and structure of print, and
3) the conventions of reading.

Understanding the function of print means recognizing the fact that writing has meaning, and that this meaning is limited. It takes children a certain amount of time to comprehend how we use writing in our lives - to read signs, to enjoy stories and poems, to learn the news from the newspaper, to get information from cookbooks, recipes and other written materials. It also takes time for a child to understand that each printed word is read in only one way - that "M-O-M" is read "mom" and not "mommy;" that "C-R-E-S-T" is read "Crest" and not "toothpaste" or "brush your teeth."

An even more basic problem related to comprehending the printed word stems from the fact that young children do not realize that speech is composed of building blocks called words. Mason explains:

> A number of researchers have studied some aspects of children's acquisition of knowledge about print and speech, using the terms word consciousness or segmentation. Studying children's abilities to segment speech into words, Karpova in 1955 . . . described three stages of development. Three- and four-year-old children regarded the sentence as composed of semantic units; words were not distinguished. For example, the sentence "Galyla and Vova went walking" was said to contain two words, "Galyla went walking" and "Vova went walking." At the next stage, children were able to identify object nouns or to separate sentences into subject and predicate. In the third stage, children understood the notion of wordness, except that compound or multisyllable words were sometimes mismarked and functions were often not distinguished. (pp. 519 - 520)

I myself experienced this lack of word consciousness when working with my own daughter. When I taught her how to spell her name, I told her that she should put a space between "Amy" and "Noguchi." "Why?" she asked. When I said that the space showed that these were different words, she went on to ask, "What's a word?"

This difficulty in understanding what words are may be greater for Japanese-English bilinguals, since the boundaries between words in Japanese are fuzzy and not clearly marked in print.

Another problem children have in understanding the printed word is that the relationship between written and spoken language is not usually linear. Mason cites a number of other studies to show that even at the time they start school, children often do not understand how words in print are related to familiar spoken expressions. Mason continues:

> . . . beginning reading instructors ought to be well aware of the conceptual problem young children face when confronted by whole sentences, many of which are written in a style that poorly

matches children's speech utterances. (p. 522)

Since parents often report that children begin to read by watching TV commercials, noticing words on food containers or reading traffic signs, Mason concludes that at least in the beginning, it is very helpful for a child to experience direct or nearly direct matching between speech and print.

The second strand of knowledge Mason hypothesizes as necessary to independent reading is comprehension of the form and structure of print. Although this term sounds rather comprehensive, Mason uses it to mean the understanding of the correlation between letters and sounds. To achieve this, the child first has to be able to identify letters correctly. This involves learning the distinguishing characteristics of each letter - no small feat in itself when you consider the similarity of such letters as the lower case b, d, p and q.[1] Research has shown that a child's ability to name letters generally precedes the ability to "sound out" words.

Research projects by Mason and D. Durkin also suggests an important link between writing and preschoolers' interest in naming letters and reading words. Mason's research showed that children begin "to write at about the same time they began to recognize printed words." Moreover,

> Durkin (1966) reported important differences based on home interviews between parents of early readers and nonearly readers. For example, between 47% and 83% of parents of early readers said that paper, pencil, blackboards and reading materials were available, while only between 14% and 23% of parents of nonearly readers provided these supports. (pp. 525-526)

Mason therefore hypothesizes that "writing as an avenue of learning about the form and structure of print might be more important than we yet realize." (p. 526)

Once children have learned to identify letters, they need to link these letters to specific sounds. Of course, English has more sounds - more than 40 by various estimates - than are represented by the 26 letters of the alphabet. Moreover, some sounds are represented by more than one letter - take the "k" sound, which is written with a "k" in "kite" and a "c" in "cat". What's more, some letters can be pronounced in a number of different ways - take the "c", for instance, which sounds like a "k" in "candy" and an "s" in "civil". Also, some letters represent two distinct phonemes. "x", for example, sounds like "gz" in "exact" and "ks" in "exercise". And finally, the names of the letters of the alphabet do not always describe a letter's principle phoneme, as in the case of "h" or "w".

So how do children learn what sounds each letter makes and how to use the sounds to make words? Although there is no conclusive evidence on this topic, Mason reports that Gibson and Levin (1975) suggest three possibilities: (1) by induction, (2) by being given a verbalization of a rule, and (3) by practice with contrasting patterns.

The last strand of knowledge Mason theorizes is essential to independent reading is an understanding of the conventions of reading. This involves a

grasp of terms related to reading, including *letters*, *words*, *sentences*, *pages*, *front*, *back*, *top*, *bottom*, *cover*, *end*, *beginning*, *first*, *last*, *big word*, *little word*, *long word*, *short word*, and *syllable*, as well as the convention of reading from left to right, the function of punctuation and spaces, and the social rules for reading lessons.

Mason notes that while much of the terminology "is learned easily through instruction, some important terms (e.g., *word*, *syllable*, *right*, *left*, *beginning*) are not understood by many children even after a year of instruction." (p. 530 - emphasis mine).

The actual process of acquiring knowledge of the function, form and structure of print as well as the conventions of reading - known as developing prereading skills - occurs in three fairly distinct stages, which Mason describes as follows:

> The first level is denoted by children's ability to read at least one printed word, usually their name or a few signs and labels. They can also recite the alphabet, recognize a few letters, and may print letters. At the second level, they read a few short and very common words from books, print, and spell short words, and begin to try reading new words by looking at the first consonant. At the third level, they notice and begin to use the more complex letter-sound to word-sound congruences and letter-pattern configurations. Thus, first-level children recognize words by context, second-level children begin to use letter- and word-sound cues, and third-level children rely on a sounding-out strategy to identify words. (p. 516)

Mason goes on to suggest that it takes nine months to a year of instruction, either by parents or at a school, to bring a child up to the third level - and this is still considered a "prereading" stage.

It may appear that I have covered the difficulty of grasping the concept of reading at undue length. I believe, however, that teachers need to be aware that it is not easy for a child to understand what reading is all about, especially since most of these basic concepts are never taught, but must somehow be inferred by the child. Moreover, it is extremely important for *parents* who are teaching their own children to read to be aware of the difficulties of the process, since they will have few other students to compare their subjects with, and might otherwise give up on their children entirely, feeling that they will simply never "get it".

In fact, quite a few of the respondents in my 1990 survey of parents who had taught their children to read English in Japan mentioned the need for patience or expressed a wish that they had had greater patience with their children. The mother of one of the better readers in my survey wrote that,

> "before [her daughter] could blend sounds to read with some meaning she could recognize for herself, it was all uphill. It was push, push, push, for the first year, [and] she would use any excuse to run off . . ."

I therefore believe that it is very important for parents to clearly understand what it is that they have to get across to their children and to be prepared to take plenty of time to do it.

Notes

(1) Calfree (1972) states,

> "The fact that children confuse the letter pairs *b-d* and *p-q* has been repeatedly documented (see Fellows, 1968 and Benton, 1959, for reviews). The problem is universal, profound and persistent. Substantially more than half of all kindergarten children confuse these pairs sometimes." (pp. 151-152).

Chapter IV: Methodology

Phonics vs Meaning

The teaching of reading in America has long been dominated by a battle between two main approaches, one emphasizing phonics, and the other, often referred to as the "look-say" approach, emphasizing the meaning of entire words. The latter approach was introduced by Horace Mann in the early 1800s as an advance over the alphabet-based teaching methods that prevailed at the time. Mann's system prospered until around 1880, when strict phonics programs became popular. However, by around 1915, there was increasing "dissatisfaction with the heavy emphasis on word analysis to the exclusion of concern for comprehension" and the pendulum again swung toward the "look-say" approach (Johnson & Baumann, 1984, p.585).

Today, there is still a great deal of heated debate on which system produces better readers. While the validity of phonics is called into grave doubt by many experts, including the renowned reading specialist Frank Smith,[1] this system is generally accepted as the best approach to help children learn how to sound out words. The problem is that often phonics readers are not able to understand the sounds that they produce. Children taught by the "look-say" approach, on the other hand, generally understand what they read, but at some point they have to infer the rules for sounding out new words, and unfortunately, not all of them are able to do so.

Although a great deal of research has been conducted on this controversy, no conclusive evidence has yet been produced. In the chapter of the *Handbook of Reading Research* (1984) entitled "Word Identification", Dale D. Johnson and James F. Baumann report that recent research confirms that

> programs emphasizing early, reasonably intensive phonics instruction produce readers who are more proficient at word pronunciation than programs emphasizing meaning. (p.594)

They point out, however, that qualitative analysis of the errors made by children instructed under these two programs indicates that children taught to read by the "look-say" method make errors that are "real words, meaningful and systematically appropriate", where children taught using a phonics-based approach tend to make non-word errors that are "graphically

and aurally like the mispronounced words" (p.590).

Johnson and Baumann note that

> The argument is thus frequently made that heavy phonics emphasis - though effective in producing accurate readers - may negatively affect meaning acquisition in reading.

They therefore warn:

> Although research has not conclusively verified this charge, there still remains a possibility that heavy emphasis on phonics may negatively affect comprehension ability and perhaps affective aspects of reading as well. (pp. 595-596)

Johnson and Baumann reach a very carefully worded conclusion: "phonics instruction is necessary and essential for many children; consequently, it should be an integral part of all beginning reading programs." However, they note, "the wise and experienced teacher will not lose sight of the ultimate goal of reading: meaning acquisition" (p. 595).

In their discussion of word identification, Johnson and Baumann also review research on specific phonics instruction techniques. They indicate that a sequence of word analysis, segmentation and blending can help teach children generalizations that can apply to unknown words. In this approach,

> Children are initially taught letter-sound correspondences by analyzing words in their speaking/listening vocabulary; they are then taught to segment words into phonemic units; and finally, they are instructed in the skill of blending those isolated sounds into known and previously unknown words. It is the last step - blending - that has been shown to be most crucial in the transfer of phonic analysis skills to the reading of unfamiliar words. (p. 595)

Johnson and Baumann also state that the auditory-visual method of blending training has been shown to be an effective phonics instruction technique. In this system, words are written for the children to see, and then pronounced. Consonants are then substituted and the new word is pronounced. For example, the teacher writes and says "cat," erases the "c" and puts in "h," and then says "hat" (p. 592).

Finally, Johnson and Baumann report that research by Guthrie and Siefert (1977) indicates that there may be what they call a "hierarchy" of phonics instruction - that is, an order in which it is easier for children to learn them. A fair amount of research has shown that "the beginnings of words provide readers the most powerful phonics cues in identifying unknown words." Thereafter, in ascending order of difficulty, the hierarchy consists of consonant vowel combinations, then short vowel words, then long vowel words, then special rule words, and finally, what they term "nonsense words" (p. 594).

Among the parents in my 1990 survey of native English speakers who

had taught their children to read English while they were going to Japanese schools, most mentioned phonics as part of their teaching approach, although generally it appeared to be only a very small portion of their instruction, with the major emphasis being on simply reading together. The parent of two of the high-achievement readers seemed to sum things up for all when he noted that reading good books over and over again was, in his words,

> the real program. The other stuff - phonics and decoding skills and learning how to write letters was real work - it helped somewhat but was such a struggle. . .

I would like to conclude this section by noting that in recent years, the concept of teaching "whole language" has gained considerable support among elementary school teachers in America. While I feel that this approach is an extension of the "look-say" method, in that it emphasizes meaning over decoding, it has some special advantages, particularly in programs promoting bilingualism and biliteracy. I will therefore explain it in more depth and also consider research on its applications in the next section.

Whole Language

In the past decade or so, the teaching of reading in American schools has undergone a major revolution. So- called "basal readers" have been replaced by "great literature", and children in the lower grades are encouraged to write freely and extensively without worrying too much about spelling. They learn to like reading and responding to literature while gradually absorbing the rules of how this is done. These trends are manifestations of a philosophy originally advanced by Kenneth S. Goodman in 1967. While this approach is generally referred to by the name Goodman gave it - "Whole Language" - as the debate over its effectiveness has heated up, some educators have coined other names for it to avoid controversy. These include "emergent literacy programs" and "integrating reading and writing".

By whatever name this approach is known, the Whole Language philosophy is based on the idea that written language, like oral language, can be learned naturally by having learners watch how people who are more proficient at its use go about using it, and then by trying to do these things themselves. Reading is not taught as a series of decoding skills or as a way of combining strings of words that can be recognized by sight. Rather, lessons are designed to develop all four language skills at once, and to help students use their prior knowledge, to make predictions, to take risks without fear, and to learn from others around them, including their peers. The deep connection between language and context is emphasized and exploited. Teachers help students develop strategies for dealing with the written word, often by modeling these strategies. Literacy is not viewed as a solitary activity: children learning to read are taught to actively respond to a text and discuss it with others; those learning to write are made aware of their audience and encouraged to use audience questions as a basis for revising their work.

Carrasquillo (1993) lists six major characteristics of a Whole

Language curriculum:

1) It is learner-centered, focusing on topics familiar to the learners and building on their prior knowledge and experience.
2) It teaches language top-down, starting with whole texts of real literature, and then gradually looking at the parts as necessary. The meaningfulness of language is emphasized as children are allowed to appreciate and compose whole works.
3) All four modes of language are emphasized from the beginning rather than introduced in a specific sequence. Development of all modes at once enriches the learner's language.
4) The curriculum is meaningful and functional, based around thematic units in content areas, in which skills, strategies and processes needed to grasp and convey meaning are acquired and applied.
5) It is interactive, encouraging students to learn from each other as well as from the teacher.
6) It allows students to learn at their own pace, taking learners from their original level of language acquisition up through higher levels of performance.

To these, we might add some other research findings on language learning that were summarized by Newman (1985, p. 5).

* Language learning necessarily involves the risk of trying new strategies; error is inherent in the process.
* Reading and writing are context-specific; what is learning about them is a reflection of the situation in which the learning occurred.
* Choice is an essential element of learning and children should be given chances to choose what they want to read and write about.

In practice, a Whole Language unit on "The Little Engine That Could" might start with the teacher asking the students what they know about trains, or if they ever tried to do something very difficult. After activating the children's knowledge of the subject and making sure that they were familiar with key vocabulary words, she might then go on to read the story from a "Big Book" so that all the children could see it at the same time. During the story, she might ask the children to look at the pictures on each page before reading the text, and have them talk about what they think is happening in the story or what the characters are feeling. She might also pause at key points to ask the children what they think will happen next, then later on let them check their predictions. After the story is read, students might be asked to react to it - first orally, then later by either writing something themselves or dictating their thoughts to the teacher or an aid, depending upon their writing abilities. Writing is usually followed by having the children read what they wrote, and allowing them to revise their work as they see fit (depending upon feedback from their audience). Further follow-up activities may include role plays or having the students write their own stories as individuals or as a class. After the story is read a number of times, the children may be asked to read it themselves. This may be done as a class, or volunteers may be asked to read sections to avoid

putting undue pressure on the children.

Thus throughout the lesson, all four language skills are in use, and decoding rules, spelling, structural analysis, etc., are taught naturally as a result of need, and not in isolation. Crawford (1993) notes: "Skill development may ... be viewed as an outcome of learning to read, rather than as its cause" (p. 67). He also points out that the recommended Whole Language strategies are very much like the "enrichment" activities that teachers - especially those teaching minority children - often feel they don't have time to do because they are busy trying to teach basic skills.

The Whole Language approach is supported by a wealth of theory in the fields of education, psychology and language acquisition. Hedley (1993) cites Vygotsky's theories on cognitive development to support a number of facets of the Whole Language approach, including the interactive nature of the curriculum, the use of content-rich teaching environments, the strategy of having teachers and other adults model their use of language, and the belief that children do not have to be anxious or frustrated in order to learn. She also points to cognitive processing theory to explain why top-down approaches are more effective and why activating prior knowledge is important to help learners retain what they learn. Other theories that support the Whole Language philosophy include Krashen's concept of "comprehensible input" and recent developments in schema theory, which suggest that readers can more easily read - or only read - about topics which they already have some knowledge of. Moreover, support for minimizing error correction can be found in Brumfit's theory on effective school environments and research by Berko-Gleason on the relationship between positive feelings towards a language and culture and greater progress in learning that language (Acuna-Reyes, 1993).

Moreover, the Whole Language approach seems ideal for parents trying to teach bilingual children how to read the minority language. Parents are natural models for their children anyway, so it makes sense for them to demonstrate the use of reading and writing in various forms in everyday life. They have already taught their children to speak using an interactive approach, so they can simply continue this approach in teaching reading and writing.[2] And if reading and writing lessons are simply viewed as extensions of family reading time in which English-speaking parents share their culture and literature, the four modes of language can be integrated naturally while allowing a large amount of important cultural input. The use of great literature not only offers a rich context, but also allows families to devote time to reading works that have great cultural significance. Moreover, creating a warm, supportive learning atmosphere is obviously a better way to maintain family unity than by pushing children to do work sheets and drills. Also, parents are in an ideal position to know exactly what their children's language level is, what their interests are, and what pace is appropriate for lessons. Thus, by employing this approach, parents can make sure that their children enjoy reading in English, while helping them master strategies that will allow them to respond to great literature throughout their lives.

Unfortunately, however, as pointed out in Chapter IV, research has shown that not all children absorb the rules of sounding out new words in

English simply through repeated exposure to examples. N-SIG member Craig Smith discusses the debate between Whole Language and structured approaches emphasizing phonics and skills in "Teaching Japanese-English Bilingual Children to Read English at Home" (Smith, C. 1996). He explains that in his semi-volunteer work as a counsellor for children with English reading problems here in Japan, he came across two cases that illustrate the pitfalls of relying exclusively on either approach. In one case, a young Japanese-English bilingual girl who was trained using only Whole Language techniques started to refuse to read out loud with her mother after they began reading melodramatic serials aimed at American teenagers. Her problem was that she could not read many of the new words she encountered because she had not learned techniques for sounding them out and they appeared in cultural contexts with which she was not familiar. She therefore refused to read out loud - and that worried her parents, causing more anxiety on the child's part, when in fact, she was a very good reader.

On the other hand, in another case mentioned by Smith, a boy who had been given intensive phonics instruction was able to vocalize long passages in English, but his pronunciation errors made it clear that he had no understanding of what he was "reading" - he was simply bluffing his way through. Smith concluded that some use of both phonics and Whole Language techniques was necessary to eliminate learner anxiety, which often leads to real reading problems (Smith, 1996).

Similarly, Hedley (1993) remonstrates with those who create "either-or dichotomies" where "both-and" approaches are possible (p. 186). She notes that while "language is best learned as interactive and social, ... there is a place for studying grammars, form, and usage." Moreover, lessons are better when both direct and indirect teaching occur. Thus, while highly recommending the Whole Language approach, she does not advocate complete elimination of work sheets, drills, and other traditional techniques for teaching skills when they are necessary.

Parents planning to teach their children to read English in Japan would therefore be wise to familiarize themselves with all three major techniques - phonics, "look-say" and Whole Language - and then, while basically following the style of teaching suggested by the Whole Language philosophy, incorporate work sheets and/or drills when it seems appropriate. I would like to conclude my comments on methodology by noting that in fact, some of the reading programs available from major textbooks publishers in the States - Houghton Mifflin and Scott Foresman, to name only two - artfully combine these approaches in a systematic way, thus taking the burden off the parent/teacher. Addresses for these publishers are listed in the Appendix at the end of this monograph.

Notes

(1) For a strong argument against the usefulness of phonics, see "The Fallacy of Phonics" in Smith (1985, pp. 45-65).

(2) In fact, Whole Language specialist Judith M. Newman even suggests that teachers make their teaching style more like that of parents, whose "overriding concern is with making communication work". Parents, she notes, tend to work hard at "tracking" their children's utterances

to figure out what they mean, rather than "fishing for specific answers" or "asking questions which can be answered in a single word." Newman asserts that "As teachers, we must make it possible for children to learn through talk." (Newman, 1985, pp. 10 - 13).

Chapter V: 1990 Survey

A. Outline

In an effort to discover what factors might contribute to success when foreign parents try to teach their bilingual children to read in the minority language, I conducted a survey of English-speaking parents who had attempted this task. In the latter half of 1990, I distributed a questionnaire to 22 native speakers of English, each from a different family, who had made efforts to teach their children to read English in Japan without the aid of international schools. These parents had taught a total of 40 children, 32 of whom had already learned to read English sentences by the time the survey was conducted. 23 of the 32 had been taught without ever having attended a school in which English was used as the medium of instruction.

To evaluate family characteristics that may have affected the success of such home reading lessons, the questionnaire requested information on the nationality of, languages spoken by, and occupation of both parents in the family. It also asked about the children's age, where the family had lived since the children were born, the types of school the children had attended (Japanese, foreign or international), and home language patterns. The parents were then asked to assess their children's speaking, listening comprehension, reading and writing abilities in English.

To determine the influence of characteristics of the reading lessons themselves, the questionnaire inquired about the teaching schedule, the atmosphere of the lessons (formal or informal), the teaching method and materials used, and the children's age and ability to read Japanese at the time the lessons began. In addition, the parents were asked to list their objectives in teaching their children to read English and any problems encountered in the lessons themselves.

Among the survey subjects were 23 children who had already learned to read sentences in English and had been taught their English reading skills exclusively in this country while attending Japanese schools. Based on the parents' reports of the children's reading levels, I divided these 23 into three basic levels of success in achieving biliteracy: high, moderate, and low. Since children are normally able to read English independently by the time they reach third-grade level, I used this level as a cut-off point for English reading competency. Children who were reading at third-grade level or above and were less than two years behind average monolingual English speakers their age were put in the high English reading achievement group. Children under the age of nine who had not yet achieved third-grade level but who could already read English sentences, and those nine years of age or older who were reading at the second-grade level or above and were two to three years behind monolinguals their age were assigned to the moderate English reading achievement group. Those who could read English

sentences or first-grade level materials but were more than three years below grade level were put in the low English reading achievement group. The other 17 children were assigned to one of two other categories: "prereaders" (not yet able to read more than the alphabet and their own name in English) or "hard to evaluate the effectiveness of parental reading lessons" (because they had learned to read English while living in a foreign country, had transferred to an English-medium school long before the survey was taken, or were being schooled entirely in English and thus were not biliterate).

I then looked at the relationship between these admittedly rather arbitrary English reading achievement levels and the following factors: the nationality of the parents, the language abilities of the parents, parents' occupations, use of languages in the family, experience living in an English-speaking country, the age and timing of the initiation of the English reading lessons, the degree of formality of the lessons, the teaching materials used, and the frequency of the lessons given. Unfortunately, space limitations do not permit a detailed presentation of the data here. (A complete report of the survey results is forthcoming in Japanese in a compilation edited and translated by Masayo Yamamoto: 『バイリンガルの世界：二つの言語と家族、教育、文化』[*Bairingaru no sekai: Futatsu no gengo to kazoku, kyoiku, bunka*]、to be published by Taishukan shoten [大修館書店]). I will, however, discuss the tentative conclusions I drew from the data here.

I feel compelled to preface this discussion with a note of caution, however. The original purpose of the survey was simply to gather information that might be of help to parents wishing to teach their children to read English while living in Japan, not to produce reliable statistics. Moreover, the scale of the survey was limited: 22 families teaching a total of 40 children. Another problem with the data is the fact that the children's English language abilities were not evaluated independently; it relies on parental assessment of the children's English language skills. Thus the objectivity of the evaluations is open to question, and in some cases, I actually felt compelled to modify the parent's assessment because conflicting information was available from an outside source. Furthermore, even though guidelines for evaluation of the children's abilities were suggested in the questionnaire ("roughly same as native speakers his/her age, fluent but a bit below average for his/her age, first-grade level, second-grade level," etc.), the wording of the parent's evaluations varied greatly, making accurate comparisons impossible. Finally, it must be noted that language proficiency, like many other skills, does not stay at the same level over time. Skills deteriorate if not maintained, and soar when given special attention. They therefore may rise and fall at different periods in a person's life, depending upon how much or little they are used. This survey, then, gives little more than a "snapshot" of the children's English language skills at one moment in time, as filtered through the highly subjective eyes of people who have a great stake in their success - their parent/teachers.

Despite such problems, however, I feel the survey offers many insights for parents who are considering teaching their Japanese-English bilingual children to read English, and therefore will present the tentative

conclusions drawn, along with additional information gleaned from other research.

B. Results

1. Parental Factors

To determine whether certain family characteristics affected the English reading achievements of the children in the survey families, their parents' nationalities, language abilities and occupations, as well as older siblings' English reading ability, family language patterns, and any experience the children had in living in an English-speaking country were analyzed in terms of correlation to the children's English reading achievement levels. We will now look at the first three of these factors, all of which concern the parents of the children.

Nationality

It was found that in families where both parents were native speakers of English, all of the children who were taught solely by their parents while residing in Japan were included in the high English reading achievement group. This high success rate may be attributed to the fact that both of the parents were able to teach their children to read English, although another possible reason is also explored below.

In families where the parents had an international marriage, it was found that a greater proportion of the children who had native English-speaking fathers were in the upper two reading achievement groups (58%) and a lower proportion in the low reading achievement and prereader groups (42%) than among international families where the native speaker of English was the mother, where these proportions were 43% and 57%, respectively. These results contradicted the researcher's expectations: since mothers generally have a stronger influence over their children than fathers, it had been assumed that families in which the sole native English-speaking parent was the mother would have children with higher levels of English reading achievement than those in which the only native English-speaking parent was the father. Although the results of this survey must remain tentative due to its limited scale and less than rigorous methodology, one possible explanation for these results involves the relative stability of the family's residence in this country. The importance of the "dream of return" to an immigrant's home country in maintaining that country's language and ethnic identity has been described in a study of ethnic Italians in Belgium (Byram, 1990). In the case of the English-speaking foreign residents in Japan, however, the possibility of return to the home country was far more than the type of "dream" held by the second- and third-generation Italians in the Byram study. It must therefore have been an even stronger incentive for language maintenance.

It would seem possible to argue, then, that the more likely the return to the foreign resident's home community, the more likely the home country's language would be maintained. If it can be presumed that families where both parents are foreign residents are more likely to leave Japan than those in which one parent is Japanese, then this could be a factor in the high English reading achievement levels displayed by the children of these

families in the survey. Moreover, in international families, it may be surmised that a family in which the father (presumably the primary breadwinner) is a foreigner may feel less secure in Japan, and thus may wish to be prepared for the possibility of a move to the father's home country. In fact, two of the fathers surveyed specifically mentioned the need to prepare their children for a possible move to another country as one of their objectives in teaching their children to read English. Moreover, in one of these cases, which involved two of the children in the high English reading achievement group, such a move was actually made.

Families in which the father is Japanese, on the other hand, may feel more secure because they are living in the father's native land, and therefore do not worry as much about the possibility of being uprooted and having to deal with another language. Thus the motivation for learning to read the minority language would be lower. This hypothesis is supported by three of the families surveyed. The mother in one of these families mentioned that the family had originally intended its stay in Japan to be limited to a period of two or three years, and that this was why she began teaching her children to read English. Another mother mentioned the slight possibility of a move as one of the motivating factors in her lessons. In both cases, however, this possibility dimmed considerably over time, and as a result, dedication to teaching flagged as well. The younger children in these families therefore had lower levels of competence in all four English language skills than their older siblings. In contrast, one of the native English-speaking mothers in an international marriage mentioned that one of her objectives was to prepare her daughter for a possible transfer to an international school in case things did not go well in Japanese school. She kept up the English reading lessons at a high pace for two years, then relaxed in the third year - in part because by that time her daughter was in fact comfortable in Japanese school. This child is included in the high English reading achievement level group.

Thus, rather than the parents' nationality *per se*, the stability of the family's residence in Japan and the degree of the family's acculturation in this country seemed to play important roles in determining parental motivation in teaching their children to read English: the lower the security and acculturation, the higher the motivation. As a result, those families with the lowest long-term residence security in general had the highest levels of English reading achievement. It must be stressed, however, that children from all three types of families (those with two foreign parents, those of international marriages with a Japanese mother, and those of international marriages with a Japanese father) were included in the high English reading achievement group. Furthermore, the levels achieved by two of the children of English-speaking mothers and Japanese fathers were very high indeed. Thus the nationality or native language of the parents, or the likelihood of their return to their home country, cannot be said to be the sole determinant of motivation or achievement level.

Languages Spoken

The survey questionnaire asked parents to list the languages they spoke, but they were not requested to rate their fluency in these languages, nor was

any independent evaluation of their proficiency made. In all cases, English was listed as one of the languages spoken by both of the parents, so no comparison could be made in this area. A number of the foreign parents, though, did not list Japanese as one of the languages they spoke or used such qualifiers as "some" or "basic." In fact it was found that in all but one of the cases in the high English reading achievement group, at least one of the native English-speaking parents indicated that their ability to speak Japanese was very limited. Although only one of the ten foreign parents with children in this group did not claim to speak Japanese at all, only three of the ten indicated they spoke more than a little Japanese. In contrast, 71% of the parents of children in the moderate English reading achievement group listed Japanese (without any qualifying adjectives) as one of the languages they spoke. Among the parents of the low achievement group, 60% indicated they spoke more than a little Japanese, while among the parents of the prereaders, 67% of the native English-speaking parents indicated they could speak Japanese. It would appear, then, that the ability of native English-speaking parents to speak Japanese well may be related to lower achievement levels in reading English on the part of their children. This may be because an ability to speak a fair amount of Japanese indicates that the foreign residents in these families are more acculturated in Japan, and, as argued above, therefore may feel less of a necessity to teach their children the language of their home country. An inability to speak Japanese on the part of the English-speaking parents did not necessarily lead to higher levels of reading achievement, however, suggesting that the need to communicate with the parent in English in and of itself was not the deciding factor.

Occupation

In looking at the occupation of the survey parents, two aspects were examined: whether there was a difference in the achievement levels of children of native English-speaking mothers in international marriages when the mothers worked and when they were full-time homemakers, and whether the children born of international marriages achieved higher levels if the occupation of their Japanese parent involved the use of English.

Some evidence was found that English-speaking mothers in international marriages ensured better results in their English reading lessons when they devoted most of their time to the home. All of the children of the three English-speaking mothers who listed their occupation as housewife plus some part-time work were in the high English reading achievement level group; moreover, these mothers accounted for 60% of the native English-speaking mothers in international marriages who had children in this group. In contrast, all of the mothers of children in the other groups had jobs outside the home. However, it should be noted that there were two international families in which the native English-speaking mother held down a full-time job outside of the home and managed to raise children in the high English reading achievement group. Thus, firm evidence on the influence of outside work on the part of native English-speaking mothers - or lack of it - must await a larger-scale survey.

In looking at the occupations of Japanese spouses in international

families, it was found that there were cases of Japanese spouses who did not have careers involving English among the families that produced children in the high English reading achievement group, as well as cases of Japanese spouses who did have careers involving English among the families that produced children in the low achievement group. It was noted, though, that 50% of the Japanese parents of children born of international marriages in the high achievement group were college English professors, while 29% of those in the moderate achievement, 40% of those in the low achievement group, and 14% of those in the prereaders group had otheroccupations involving English. It should be noted, however, that all of these other occupations were far more demanding in terms of time away from home than being a college professor in Japan. Thus, there appeared to be a slight tendency for higher achievement when the Japanese spouse had an occupation involving English, but this tendency was most pronounced when the occupation allowed more time to be spent at home.

Now that we have summarized the survey's findings on parental factors that might influence children's English reading achievement, we will go on to look at the effect of other family characteristics.

2. Other Family Characteristics

Family Language Use

The survey questionnaire asked parents to state the language(s) used in communication between the mother and the children, between the father and the children, and among the children in the family. The responses varied considerably, with each family in the high English reading achievement group using a different pattern, ranging from all English, to one-person/one-language, to a mixture of the two languages. When analyzed on a continuous scale ranging from predominantly English to predominantly Japanese use, however, it was found that in the high English reading achievement group, the parent-child language pattern was predominantly English in five out of seven families (71%), while Japanese patterns were stronger (60% to 40%) among siblings. In contrast, in the other groups the parent-child language pattern tended to be balanced, with parents speaking their native language or mixing the two languages in five out of seven families (71%) in the moderate English reading achievement group, four out of five families (80%) in the low reading achievement group, and five out of six families (83%) in the prereader group. Moreover, in all three of these groups, Japanese dominated communication among siblings, being stronger in five out of six families (83%) in the moderate achievement group, all families (100%) in the low achievement group, and four out of six families (67%) in the prereader group.

Thus, although families were able to reach high levels of English reading achievement using a wide variety of family language patterns, the predominant use of English had a higher correlation to high English reading achievement levels than more balanced schemes such as the one-person/one-language approach.

Older Siblings' English Reading Ability

Questionnaire responses were also analyzed to determine whether the achievement levels of younger children correlated to those of their older siblings. It was found that of the children in the high English reading achievement group who had older brothers and sisters, all of the older siblings had learned to read English at an English-centered school or were also in the high reading achievement group. Of the two children in the moderate achievement group who had older siblings, one had an older brother who had learned to read English in an English-medium school, while the other had an older brother in the low English reading achievement group. In the low achievement group, one had an older sibling in the moderate achievement group and the other had an older sibling in the low achievement group. Similarly, in the cases of six out of seven of the children in the prereader group who had older brothers and sisters, the older siblings were in the moderate or low achievement groups.

Thus, children who had older brothers or sisters who had learned to read in an English-medium school or who had high English reading achievement levels tended to have higher English reading achievement levels themselves. This may be due to a psychological need to compete with older siblings, role modeling, help or encouragement on the part of the older children, or higher motivation in teaching English reading skills on the part of the parents.

Experience Living in an English-Speaking Country

The last characteristic of the survey families analyzed was the possible influence of early experience living in an English-speaking country on children's later achievements in English reading. Ideally, all aspects of contact with English, including visits to English-speaking countries, visits by English-speaking friends of the family, and contact with English-speaking playmates, should have been analyzed, but unfortunately, I did not have the foresight to ask for this information on the questionnaire. Thus the actual experience of living abroad was the only information elicited from the survey parents.

As mentioned in the outline of the survey, children who had learned to read English while living abroad or going to an English-medium school in Japan were not assigned to achievement groups, but rather, were eliminated from data analysis because the effectiveness of their parents' English lessons was hard to evaluate. However, for children who had only lived in an English-speaking country before they started reading, it was thought that the effects of this experience would not have as direct a bearing on their reading and writing skills, and it was therefore analyzed.

It was found that five of the nine (56%) children in the high English reading achievement group had lived in an English-speaking country for two years or longer before they began learning to read English, while the other four (44%) in that group had no such experience. In the moderate achievement group, two of the eight children (25%) had lived in America for two and a half years, one had lived in America for an unspecified short period of time, and the other five (62.5%) had never lived outside of Japan. In the low English reading achievement group, one of the six (17%) had

lived in America for a short period, while the other five (83%) had only lived in Japan. Finally, in the prereader group, none of the children had ever lived abroad.

Thus, there was a strong correlation between early experience living in an English-speaking country and later English reading achievement levels. It should be noted, however, that a substantial percentage of children in the high achievement group (44%) had never lived outside of Japan.

3. Lesson Characteristics

In addition to characteristics of the parents and families of the children in the survey, I also analyzed certain characteristics of the English reading lessons themselves to determine the effect, if any, they might have had on the reading levels achieved by the children. The questionnaire elicited information on five aspects of the lessons that could have influenced the outcome: the age of the child when lessons were begun, whether or not the child could already read Japanese, the degree of formality of the lessons, the type of materials used, and finally, the level of parental dedication to the task as measured by the regularity and duration of the lessons.

Age and Timing of Initiation of Lessons

Before presenting the survey results on these two characteristics of the subjects' English reading lessons, I would like to consider the reasons why the order in which literacy skills for the two languages is learned might make a difference.

English or Japanese First?

Waiting to start English reading instruction until after a J-E bilingual child acquires Japanese literacy would appear to offer a number of advantages. First, the child would have a base to build on. S/he would already understand the concept of reading, at least in terms of the basics of how print works. It is true that the Japanese term "*kotoba*" is not the exact equivalent of the English term "word", and some confusion might result from this difference. However, the basic idea that written symbols have specific sounds attached to them would certainly carry over, as would the child's understanding of punctuation and many other conventions of reading. Thus, by delaying the teaching of English reading until after the child had learned to read Japanese, the parent would eliminate the need to transmit knowledge of the function of print and the many conventions of reading (covered in detail in Chapter III). In this way, parental instruction would for the most part only have to cover the second of the three strands of knowledge outlined by Mason (1984): the form and structure of English print. Moreover, even in that area, some transference would be possible. The concept of blending, for example, could be compared to the compression of sounds represented by the Japanese use of small *kana*, as in the combination of a normal-sized *shi* with a small *ya* to represent the sound *sha* (しゃ).

Also, parents who waited until their children could read Japanese would be able to take advantage of the many EFL textbooks for children that are now

on the market in this country. And because the child would be older, lessons could probably move at a much faster pace than they would with a small child, thus minimizing the time commitment.

There is some evidence that Japanese reading skills can be applied to the reading of English. In one of the cases dealt with by Craig Smith in his work counselling bilingual children who were having trouble reading English, a child who had great difficulty learning English phonics made dramatic improvement after learning to read Japanese (Smith, C. 1996).

Nonetheless, there are also several possible advantages to teaching English reading skills to children before they acquire Japanese literacy. First, such an approach would give the child a head start on reading in English - perhaps even enough of an edge to partially offset the overwhelming weight Japanese would inevitably have if the child is to be schooled in that language. Although ultimately English might be thought to be easier to read than Japanese (with its mixture of three different types of script: *hiragana*, *katakana* and thousands of *kanji*), in the beginning stages, English reading can be very frustrating. English involves a larger number of sounds than letters, while in the Japanese syllabaries (*hiragana* and *katakana*), each symbol usually represents only one sound. Thus, as soon as a child learns the names of the 46 symbols, s/he can read sentences in Japanese. And once a child learns to read Japanese painlessly, s/he might not want to struggle with English phonics.

A second reason for teaching children to read English first might be to avoid what Hamers and Blanc (1989) call "subtractive bilinguality". This terms denotes "a state in the language development of a bilingual who has reached native-speaker competence in none of his languages" (p. 270). This condition is often called "semilingualism". Hamers and Blanc conclude that this form of bilinguality will not develop in situations that involve "early simultaneous bilingual experience, where the two languages are more or less equally valorized." It is therefore not a worry for many parents of Japanese-English bilinguals. Nonetheless, it should be noted that one of the three necessary factors for this condition is that a child "has not fully developed the cognitive function of language in L1 before he is schooled." So if a child's L1 is English, developing his cognitive functioning in English before he is schooled in Japanese would be a means of insuring that the child's bilinguality did not develop into the fairly rare type regarded as subtractive.

Perhaps the most compelling reason for teaching the Japanese-English bilingual child to read English early, however, lies in the high-pressure Japanese education system. A neighbor reported that her second grader had to do at least 30 minutes of homework a day just to keep up with her class. The child even had to do work while she was home with the mumps, or risk falling dangerously behind. And she is attending a public elementary school in a fairly rural district - not one of the elite metropolitan schools. My own children's experience as well as conversations with parents from various parts of the country have confirmed that this report is far from exaggerated. In fact, some parents said that the second-grade workload was limited to 30 minutes a day only if the child sat down and worked straight through it - something which few children that age are able to do after a day at school.

One of the mothers of a child in the high English reading achievement group in my survey wrote, "Grade 2 was a very hard schedule." This mother had managed to keep her daughter reading English a full year ahead of the normal schedule, handling second grade English reading while she was in first grade in Japanese school, and finishing third grade English reading work while she was in second grade in Japanese school. But they found the schedule in the Japanese second grade highly demanding. The mother wrote that she thought she had pushed her daughter too hard, reporting that the child "became resistant and we both were stressed." They therefore relaxed their schedule during the girl's third grade school year, emphasizing grammar rules and exercises less and what the mother terms "pure" reading and writing more.

The point here is that the intense homework in the Japanese education system begins in second grade. This same mother mentioned that she "took advantage of her [daughter's] first grade in Japan's not assigning much homework." It therefore might make sense to try to get children over the major hurdles of sounding out words and into more pleasurable English reading before second grade in Japanese school.

On a theoretical level, then, arguments can be made for starting to teach literacy skills first in either language. Let us now turn to the survey to see if it can make things clearer.

Survey Results

In analyzing the lessons given by the survey parents, I looked at both the age when the English reading lessons were started and whether or not the child already knew how to read Japanese. Since American schools generally begin formal instruction in reading during kindergarten or first grade, when children are either six or seven years old, I divided the children in the study into two groups: those who began English reading lessons before the age when native speakers normally begin learning to read, and those who started at the normal age or later. All nine of the children (100%) in the high English reading achievement level group had begun lessons before the normal starting age. In the moderate achievement level group, four of the six children (67%) started earlier than normal, and in the prereader group, four of the eight (50%) had begun lessons before the age of six. Thus there was some correlation between early starting age and high English reading achievement levels.

However, when we categorize the children on the basis of the language they first learned literacy in, the results are more clearly divided. In the high English reading achievement group, seven of the nine (78%) children began English reading lessons before they had started to read Japanese. In all three of the other groups, the situation was almost reversed. In both the moderate English reading achievement level and prereader groups, six out of eight children (75%) and in the low English reading achievement level group four out of six children (67%) began learning to read English after they had begun learning Japanese. Thus, the initiation of English reading lessons before the child has learned to read Japanese seems to be strongly correlated to high levels of English reading achievement.

How Early Can You Begin?

Since the Japanese school system puts great time pressure on children starting in second grade and the survey results seemed to indicate that J-E bilingual children do better at English reading if they start to read English before they learn to read Japanese, it might be asked, "How early can you start teaching reading?"

Research by Doman (1964) and Soderbergh (cited in Mason, 1984) indicates that children can be taught to read at a very young age without being taught rules. Doman developed a system in which very young children (one and a half to about three years of age) are taught to sight-read words written in large letters on flash cards, with no formal instruction given in sounding out words (phonics).[1] After the children have learned to read a large number of words on such cards, their knowledge is transferred to the reading of books. Two of the parents in my survey employed the techniques outlined by Doman to teach their children to read English when they were very young, and both felt that it worked well.

Kamada (1995), however, discovered a number of problems with Doman's assertion that babies could be taught reading from birth, and cites other studies that challenge many of his other claims as well. It cannot be denied that many children have learned to read at least at the word level using Doman's flashcard techniques, but it must be noted that the system not only is quite demanding on both parent and child, but also, it does not work for everyone. I myself enthusiastically tried it with my son when he was 2 years old, and found that I couldn't get him to really look at the words on the cards; he just made random guesses. A friend had the same experience with her 2 year-old son, and since that time, I have met a number of others whose children did not take to this style of learning.

Moreover, I heard of another problem when I had the opportunity to discuss this method informally with the linguist Karl Diller. He told me that he had used the Doman method to teach his son to read when the boy was about four. When I asked if the child had kept it up, however, Diller explained that his son had stopped after learning to read signs, and effectively had to learn to read all over again when he began school.

On the other hand, reading stories out loud to children and helping them learn the alphabet - two activities that have been shown to have a positive effect on later reading skills (Adams, 1994) - can be started very early. After that, instruction must be based on the individual child's learning style, interest and progress, as well as the parents' schedules. However, it would seem wise to begin more formal instruction around the age of 4 - 1/2 to five years of age if the child has not already begun reading on his own. This is not to say that parents whose J-E bilingual children are already six or older should despair of ever being able to teach their children to read English. But given the demands placed upon children by the Japanese education system and the relative ease with which the early stages of Japanese reading can be traversed, parents who wish to teach their children to read English at home should probably try to begin as early as possible in order to minimize the amount of pressure this "extra" education places on their children.

Formality

To determine whether or not teaching style had an effect on English reading achievement levels, the survey questionnaire asked parents to describe the atmosphere of their lessons in terms of whether they were formal, following the style used in traditional school lessons, or informal question-and-answer sessions, and also, whether or not they were designed to be fun. I then ranked the answers on a seven-point scale, 1 signifying "formal", 2 "formal with some fun activities", 3 "formal but fun", 4 "formal first, informal later", 5 "informal first, formal later", 6 "not too formal" and 7 "informal".

In all of the reading achievement levels, there was a range of teaching styles employed. However, when I analyzed the results in terms of whether or not a completely informal style was always used in the lessons (in other words, looking at groups 1 - 6 versus group 7), I found a strong negative correlation between complete informality and high English reading achievement levels. In fact, a completely informal approach was taken with only one of the nine children (11%) in the high English reading achievement group and three of the eight children (37.5%) in the moderate English reading achievement group, but was used for four of the six children (67%) in both the low English reading achievement and prereader groups. Thus it would appear that some formal instruction is highly recommendable.

Teaching Materials

There was very little overlap in the specific teaching materials the parents in the survey used, although a number of types of materials were common. All parents in the survey mentioned that they read stories to their children a great deal, while storybooks were employed exclusively or as a major lesson focus by the parents of eight children. Correspondence course materials and reading and writing textbooks used in schools in the parent's home country were employed by the parents of nine children. Materials designed to teach English as a second language (TESOL) were used by the parents of three children, while the parents of two children developed their own materials as the prime focus of their instruction. Four parents also mentioned that they had given specific instruction in phonics in addition to their other activities. And as mentioned above, parents in two families taught a total of four children using the Doman system.

When the subject's English reading achievement levels were viewed in relation to the type of teaching materials used, it was found that reading textbooks for native speakers of English (including correspondence course materials) were used in 89% of the cases in the high achievement group. Reliance on storybooks alone, however, predominated in the less successful groups, being used in 50% of the cases in both the low English reading achievement and prereader groups, but in only one case each in the high and moderate English reading achievement groups (11% and 12.5% respectively). Achievement levels were higher when the reading of storybooks was coupled with other teaching materials, as it was in 25% (two cases) in the moderate achievement group. Materials designed for teaching English as a second language did not seem particularly effective, being used in one case each in the moderate, low and prereader groups.

Finally, the Doman system produced mixed results. It was used in 25% of the cases in the moderate English reading achievement group and 33% of those in the prereader group (two subjects each). In both cases where it was relatively effective the parents indicated that the children learned to read well at a very young age using this system, but that instruction had been continued using other methods later on.

The survey suggests, then, that reading textbooks for native speakers of English may be the most effective teaching materials, although the Doman system could also be used to teach children the early stages of reading as long as it was followed up with a continued program of English reading instruction.

Scheduling

The last characteristic of the lessons that I analyzed was the frequency and duration of the lessons. The parents gave a variety of answers to the questions of how often, how long and how regularly they gave lessons, so precise analysis was difficult. I did break down responses about the frequency of the lessons into six groups however: 1) daily, 2) five times a week, 3) two to four times a week, 4) once a week, 5) independent work assigned daily plus irregular lessons, and 6) irregular lessons. Although all of the groups except the prereader group had two cases each in which daily lessons were given, frequency appeared to be higher in the high English reading achievement level group. In eight of the nine cases in that group, lessons were reported to be held two or more times a week, and in the remaining case, the parent reported that the schedule was "very irregular, but with *at least* one 40-minute formal lesson a week" (emphasis mine).

In contrast, in the moderate English reading achievement group, five of the seven children (71%) studied once a week or less, and in one of the cases where lessons were given once a week, this pace continued for only three and a half years. Lesson frequency was also once a week or less for four of the six children (67%) in the low English reading achievement level group and all (100%) of the prereaders.

The exceptions to this trend are the two cases each of daily lessons in the moderate and low achievement groups. One has to ask why the achievement would be so modest when the lessons were so frequent. The answer seems to be that in two of the cases, the daily lessons using the Doman system were not continued after the children had learned to read to a certain extent, and that in the other two cases, the instruction was extremely informal and short. In one of the latter two cases, the daily "lessons" consisted mainly of the father reading to the child; in the other, they were short question-and-answer sessions.

Thus, in general, it can be stated that the higher the frequency of fairly structured lessons carried out over a long period of time (four years or more), the higher the English reading achievement.

C. Overall Picture From Survey Data

1. The Importance of Parental Determination

Now that I have analyzed the correlation between the English reading achievement levels of the children in the survey and specific characteristics of their families and the reading lessons they received, I would like to bring all this information together to paint a larger picture of what these statistics seem to say.

In terms of families, we saw a hierarchy of English reading achievement levels, where families in which both parents were native speakers of English had the highest success rate, followed by those families with international marriages in which the native speaker of English was the father, and then by those in which the native speaker was the mother. However, it was noted that there were children from all three types of families in the high English reading achievement group.

It was also shown that the ability of English-speaking parents to speak Japanese well tended to be correlated with lower achievements in English reading on the part of their children, although an inability to speak Japanese on the part of English-speaking parents did not necessarily lead to higher levels of English reading proficiency.

In families with international marriages, there appeared to be a positive correlation between higher English reading achievement levels and the Japanese spouse having an occupation that involved English, especially when the job involved teaching and offered long vacation periods, as in the case of college English professors. There was also some evidence that native English-speaking mothers may achieve better teaching results if they devote most of their time to the home, but this evidence was not conclusive.

It was shown that predominant use of English by both parents has a higher correlation to high English reading achievement levels than more balanced communication schemes such as the one-person, one-language approach, although families were able to reach high levels of English reading competence using a wide variety of language patterns. Moreover, we saw that there was a strong correlation between higher English reading ability levels and experience living in an English-speaking country before learning to read English.

Perhaps the most striking factor about all of these correlations, however, was that there were always exceptions. In the high English reading achievement group, there were two children born of international marriages in which the native speaker of English was the mother. In one of these cases, the mother had a job and the father's occupation did not appear to be related to English. Also, a full 44% of the children in this group had never lived outside of Japan, and this included one born of an international marriage in which the mother was the native speaker of English. It was therefore suggested that English reading achievement might be more closely related to the family's long-term expectations concerning the country of residence, with those who feel more settled in Japan less likely to push towards higher levels of English reading capability.

Finally, it was also shown that children who had older siblings who had learned to read English in an English-centered school or who had achieved high levels of English reading competency were more likely to display

higher levels of English reading achievement than those whose older siblings had not learned to read English as well.

I then went on to analyze characteristics of the English reading lessons given by the families. There appeared to be a correlation between early starting age and high English reading achievement levels, but it seemed that the more important factor was that children started learning to read English before they had learned to read Japanese. The most effective teaching materials appeared to be correspondence course materials and reading textbooks for native English speakers, although the Doman system was also shown effective in teaching children the early stages of reading, as long as it was followed up with a continued program of reading instruction. The most important characteristics of successful English reading lessons, however, seemed to be a combination of some formal instruction and high frequency.

Here again, we have an indication that motivation may be critical to success. In fact, the wording used by the survey parents in answering questions that were not reflected in the quantitative data supports this hypothesis. In all cases where the English reading achievement level was high, parents indicated that they felt it was very important for their children to be able to read English and insisted that they learn to do so. On the other hand, in cases where English reading achievement levels were lower, the parents invariably mentioned a dislike of pushing their children too hard or were content with smaller achievements. We can assume that biliteracy was simply not as high a priority with them.

It would appear, then, that while a number of characteristics of families of foreign residents and their reading lessons are correlated to success in the teaching of English reading skills at home, parental determination was probably the driving force behind most achievement.

2. The Difficulty of the Task

Having reached the conclusion that parental determination may well be the most important factor affecting how well the children of foreign residents in Japan learn to read English, I would like to take the time to look at some of the things that might lower motivation in parents.

It is never easy to teach one's child an academic subject. Many ordinary parents find themselves frustrated and angry at their children even when simply helping them with their homework. It is not surprising, then, that a number of the parents in my survey mentioned the difficulty of teaching their own children, especially in the prereading stages when a child has to learn the difficult task of sounding out words in English.

A number of parents also mentioned the fact that Japanese schools tend to assign a great deal of homework. Children were often tired from their school work and did not want to do what in many cases they felt was "extra work". One mother of a child in the moderate English reading achievement group wrote, "English studies lost out to Japanese studies."

Furthermore, all but one (96%) of the native English-speaking parents surveyed had jobs, and for all but the four (15%) who wrote "housewife" as their first or only occupation, these jobs were probably fairly time-consuming. This means English reading lessons were extra work for the parents, too. The mother who made the above comment also wrote:

> I am not a teacher, but just a tired parent who at the end of a long day wants nothing more than to put my feet up and enjoy a stretch of quiet.

It should come as no surprise, then, to learn that when asked if there were any particular problems they encountered in teaching their children to read English, seven of the parents mentioned the need to be firmer in scheduling lessons and eight cited their own busy schedules.

Resistance and lack of motivation on the part of children were also problems mentioned by four parents each. Children resisted lessons when they were tired or when parents became tense and pushed too hard. Several parents therefore wrote that they needed to be firm in scheduling but not too rigid. This is a delicate balance that surely is not easy to maintain.

One mother also wrote that her daughter resisted lessons when she "had been teased or somehow alienated ... for being *gaijin*." Children everywhere put pressure on each other to conform and bully those who are different in some way, but certainly the homogeneity of Japanese society intensifies the pressure to be like one's peers. Foreign or mixed-blood children who attend Japanese schools may therefore have a strong desire to eliminate the things that set them apart from their classmates. They may associate English with their feelings of alienation and wish to reject it.

It is therefore important for foreign parents to develop strategies for helping children see English in a less threatening, more positive light. Several parents taught their children along with their Japanese students in order to create feelings of belonging. One mother even taught her son's friends English for free for years so that they would not ostracize her or her children. The six Baha'i parents surveyed taught their children from early on that they are "world citizens" and that Baha'u'llah stresses the need for all people to learn a common language. Another mother tried to make her daughter "aware of the benefits of learning and knowing English", including "teaching as a profession [and] traveling abroad". In many cases, parents emphasized reading lots of interesting books with their children so that they would enjoy the worlds created in English stories. In these and many other ways, parents tried to make English lessons more appealing.

All the same, for all of the foreign parents in this survey, teaching their children to read English was a demanding job that put stress on their families in many ways. They all had to decide how important English reading was to them - how much stress and work it was worth - and plot their courses accordingly. Some eventually decided that it was not worth the strain on their own or their children's lives, while others felt that their children's futures depended upon it. To a large extent, their children's achievement levels reflected these value judgments.

Notes

(1) For a complete explanation of the Doman system, see *How to Teach Your Baby to Read*, by Glenn Doman, 1986, New York: Doubleday & Company, Inc. Laurel Kamada gives a thorough report on her efforts to employ this system to teach her son to read, as well as later research that contradicts much of Doman's theory, in "Teaching Reading to a

Developing Bilingual Baby: A Case Study in Three Stages", *Japan Journal of Multilingualism and Multiculturalism*, Vol. 1, 1995.

Chapter VI: General Principles for Effective Teaching

Now that we've looked at some of the factors that effect the success of English reading lessons for J-E bilingual children, I would like to offer some general advice on effective approaches to teaching reading to your own children. I'll start by explaining four basic principles.

1. Read to Children Daily

One of the best ways to ensure that children learn to read English is to introduce them to the joys of reading at an early age. And the simplest way to teach children the joys of reading is to read good books - books that both you and your children enjoy - to them. Research on early reading stresses the importance of parental input through reading aloud to children. Teachers' manuals for elementary school texts also encourage the practice of reading out loud. For example, in the Teacher's Edition of the 1989 Scott, Foresman kindergarten *Language* book, R.L. Cramer writes:

> Read to children every day. Listening and responding to stories, poems and songs read aloud is the most crucial component of literacy instruction. Nothing is more important! Reading aloud enriches language, builds background knowledge and gives pleasure. Reading aloud lays the foundation on which the superstructure of reading and writing is erected. (p. T23)

Similarly, in the *Big Book of Home Learning*, a manual for parents who homeschool their children, Mary Pride puts forth the following argument:

> Say you want to teach a child to read. You do not shove a book in front of his face and start teaching. First, you expose him to a lot of print. Big print, little print. Newsprint. Books. Cereal boxes. Meanwhile, you read to him. Snuggled in your lap, he is both cozy and unafraid - ideal conditions for learning. Slowly, he will get the idea: those black marks are letters, letters make words, and words are what Mommy is reading to me. Once he understands what reading is all about, he will probably ask you to teach him to read.

As mentioned earlier in this series, virtually all the parents in my survey stated that they read to their children a lot - in many cases, every night.

It should be noted that this kind of family read-aloud time can and should continue even after children have begun reading for themselves. I remember how much I enjoyed listening to my fourth grade teacher read a chapter of *Tom Sawyer* or *Huckleberry Finn* two or three afternoons a week. So I haven't stopped our nightly sessions even though my daughter has

learned to read simple books for herself. I simply choose longer books a little above the level at which she is reading. We have worked our way through a number of Beverly Cleary's books about Henry Huggins and his friend Ramona, as well as several of the Boxcar Children series. We usually read a chapter or two a night. In this way, I am able to ensure that her vocabulary continues to expand by exposing her to the correct pronunciation of new words and explaining their meaning. I can also explain cultural background that she lacks because she grew up in Japan.

One of the English-speaking fathers in my survey was even more ambitious; he read to his twin bilingual sons 30 minutes to an hour every night, gradually increasing the difficulty of the material. At the time of the survey, his boys were only 8 years old but they had already heard Tolkien's entire Ring cycle and remembered the whole story. They were then in the process of working their way through C. S. Lewis's Narnia tales. The father felt that this exposure to large volumes of good English literature, which the boys thoroughly enjoyed, would undoubtedly ensure that they would continue to read English in the future.

2. Tailor Your Teaching Style to Your Child's Needs

One of the biggest advantages of teaching your own children is the small class size. Teaching methods and pace can be adjusted to exactly meet the needs of the entire audience. Do not be afraid to make adjustments when appropriate.

The first major area you have control of is teaching materials. Frank Smith (1985), an authority on the psychology of reading, stresses that materials must not only be interesting to the students, but also, that they must make sense to the child - that is, be written about something the child knows about and be stated in language the child understands. One way to do this in the early stages of reading is to have children dictate stories for you to write down. Several of the parents in my survey had their children make up stories about themselves, their families and their friends. As the child "told" the story, the parent would write out a sentence or two on each sheet of paper, then have the child draw pictures to go with the sentences on each page. When the child finished, they would work on reading the story. This technique is often used in Whole Language instruction (see Chapter III) and is recommended in the teachers' manuals of a number of reading textbook series.

When using published materials, parents are advised to pick stories about things the children are interested in. In my case, my daughter loves fairy tales, while my son enjoys reading funny stories and works where the characters figure something out. Both children are much more interested in stories about characters of their own sex. For our nightly read-aloud sessions, then, I let each of them pick out one story they want me to read, so that each one gets a story s/he's interested in. During our formal reading lessons, on the other hand, we are working our way through a series of reading textbooks and each unit has important skills to be learned, so I don't feel we should skip stories. We do, however, go through stories that are less interesting to the children faster, and spend much more time on those that they like, reading them repeatedly.

Focussing on the child's interests in this way can really make a difference. Among the survey parents, one father reported having trouble getting his 8 year-old son to read on his own until they began reading Hardy Boys mysteries together. Most of the chapters in these stories have a cliffhanger ending, and after they finished one at night the father would leave the book with his son. The boy, eager to learn how the brothers would get out of their quandary, began sneaking a peek at the next chapter. He was proud when his reading comprehension was confirmed at the next evening's session, and began reading aloud with his father much more confidently.

In addition to reading materials, the method used to teach reading can also be selected according to your child's interests and needs. One father in the survey mentioned that his daughter hated his reading lessons, but like writing. By concentrating on the facet of literacy that the girl liked, the father was able to communicate a fair amount of knowledge to her. Then, when she entered an international school in junior high, she was able to catch up to her classmates rather easily. Similarly, one of the survey mothers mentioned that her daughter hated workbooks. She therefore tried a different system, called the McCracken method, and saw greater enjoyment and progress.

Scheduling should also fit your child's needs. A number of the survey parents noted that lessons did not go well when the child was tired or tense. Craig Smith, in his *Bilingual Japan* series entitled "Teaching Children to Read in the Second Language" (now available in pamphlet form as Monograph No. 1), related how he used to read to his daughter at night until he realized that lessons usually ended with one of them drifting off to sleep. They therefore decided to set aside time in the morning when they "were a little more bright-eyed and bushy-tailed". He found that "the time we spend together at the beginning of each day is now much more leisurely, a lot happier, richer in language, and child-centered."

Thus, in teaching your own child to read, it is important to be flexible and inventive in seeking out the materials, methods and time frames best suited to your child's interests and needs. You also need to remember that these may change as the child grows older, and be prepared to constantly adjust things to suit your child at his or her current stage of growth.

3. Teach Writing at the Same Time as Reading

Research indicates that preschoolers begin to write about the same time they begin to recognize printed words. Moreover, researchers are beginning to show that "writing as an avenue to learning about the form and structure of print might be more important than we yet realize" (Mason, 1984).

Dulaney (1987) also showed that first- and third-grade pupils given spelling instruction scored higher on a word recognition test than those given word recognition activities alone. The findings of Ehri and Wilce (1987) support the value of linking beginning spelling and reading instruction.

Thus it would seem advisable for parents to teach writing at the same time that they teach reading, and to give a certain amount of instruction in the seemingly mundane skill of spelling.

4. Minimize Pressure, Maximize Praise

When parents believe that it is important for their children to be biliterate, it is easy for them to become tense and irritated if their children have problems learning to read. Let me repeat the words of Dr. Spock that I quoted in Chapter II: "Too often parents make poor tutors, not because they don't know enough, not because they don't try hard enough, but because they care too much, are too upset when their child doesn't understand." (p. 452).

Pressure can be particularly devastating during reading lessons. According to Frank Smith (1985),

> One very effective way to produce incomprehensibility is to ensure that the person trying to read the book is apprehensive about making a mistake, for example, while reading aloud. Reading is not easily accomplished if you are nervous about your performance. (p. xi)

The need to relax during lessons was confirmed by one of the fathers in my survey. He mentioned becoming impatient and angry while teaching his second child because the boy didn't learn to read as fast as his older sister had. The father reflected,

> I had to stop and think about what I was doing to hinder his progress and reprogram myself. I stopped ever pressing him to read aloud to me. Instead, I only read to him for pleasure. And asked him only to follow along with me. Very, very gradually, his confidence has grown and he has become more willing to try reading aloud.

Another survey father wrote, "Don't worry about your child not being at the same level of ability as a child in your native country. In any case, you will be passing on a precious gift." The image of giving a gift is a good one for parents to keep in mind when teaching their children to read. Doman (1964) stresses that we need to remember that "Learning is a reward, it is not a punishment. Learning is a pleasure, it is not a chore. Learning is a privilege, it is not a denial." (p. 110). One of the survey parents recommended making "reading a magical time between you and your child."

Doman also recommended praising children lavishly. He recounts the story of how researchers at The Institutes for the Achievement of Human Potential divided the thousands of mothers they dealt with into two highly generalized groups: the solemn, cerebral types they nicknamed "the intellectuals", and the enthusiastic types they dubbed "the dizzy blondes". Although all of the mothers succeeded in teaching their very young children to read beyond the initial expectations of the researchers, it was the "dizzy blondes" who, contrary to expectations, achieved greater success. Moreover, as Doman in his pre women's lib way put it, "the dizzier the mother the more she accomplished" (p. 160). He noted that these mothers "showed by voice, motion and commotion their elation with the child's success." And, he concludes, "Tiny children understand, appreciate and go for 'Wow!' a great deal more than they do for carefully chosen words of

praise" (pp. 160-161). Don't we all?

Chapter VII: Keeping up the Momentum

Motivational Activities

As mentioned in Chapter VI, one of the biggest advantages of teaching your own children is the small class size, since it allows you to adjust the pace and methods of the class to the needs of your entire audience. The parents in my survey were quite inventive in tailoring their lessons to their children's needs. I would therefore like to give some examples of activities they devised to motivate their children.

One of the parents who used the Doman system developed a kind of TPR activity for young readers, where she would have her children act out words like "jump" or "run" that were shown on the Doman flash cards. This mother also created the "Word Man", who would come at times when her son was not at home and mysteriously put a label on an object in the house, hanging, for example, a card with the word "table" on the dining room table. When the boy returned home, he would often say, "I wonder if the Word Man came today," and begin looking around the house for a newly labeled item. When he found a new tag, he would, of course, "read it". After the labels had hung on objects for some time, the mother would take a few down and go over them with the boy to make sure that he really could read the words. This game is basically an offshoot of the Doman system of using flash cards to teach reading to young children (explained in Chapter V), and the other parent in the survey who used the Doman method also mentioned that they insisted he label "nearly everything in the house".

Many of the survey parents suggested using English writing in the child's environment to teach reading. Parents can point out English words on street signs and billboards when in the car, or have children sound out words on food packages or even in the newspaper at home. One child had great fun with ABC macaroni, so her mother had her read words that the mother made from the macaroni or had her daughter spell out words for herself. Educational toys such as alphabet puzzles and coloring books, flash cards, word bingo and junior scrabble were also recommended. One parent also tried to increase the amount of English in the child's daily life by writing grocery lists, etc. in English and also setting up scavenger hunts at children's parties.

Other parents invented guessing games to play with their children, creating variants on "I Spy" by substituting letters of the alphabet for descriptions of the object. For example, during a drive, the parent might say, "I spy something that begins with the letter c and has four wheels." Children can also take turns making up the riddles.

Board games with written instructions may also be good reading motivators. Our family happened to pick up a parcheesi-like game called "Outrage" at the Tower of London last year. Players move around a map of the Tower of London, attempting to "steal" the Crown Jewels and avoid getting caught by Yeoman Warders or other players, who can attack them and steal the jewels for themselves. When players land on certain squares, they have to pick either a Tower Card or a Raven Card. Each Tower Card is

decorated with the picture and name of a burglary tool (crowbar, file, dynamite, and so on) that can be used to steal the Crown Jewels, or a weapon (sword, dagger, mace, etc.) with which a player can protect himself and/or attack other players. Raven Cards, on the other hand, narrate various incidents and the resulting consequences for the player; for example, "Pecked by ravens, go to the hospital." "Have your picture taken with a Yeoman Warder. Move to any space adjacent to a Yeoman Warder's post." Or "Go to view the scepter. If you have the means, you may make an immediate attempt at theft." The vocabulary is difficult and rather arcane, but the excitement of the game provides the motivation to read. After a few family sessions, we found even our seven year-old son was able to read most of the cards quite proficiently. Repetition has reinforced both of our children's new skills and vocabulary. Thus the purchase and use of one board game resulted in a major advance in their English reading and speaking skills, as well as their knowledge of many old customs (taking sanctuary in a church, torture on the rack, confessions, etc.).

Computer software can also serve as a teaching aid, as shown by two of the fathers in the survey. One used the "Stickybear Opposite" software for his Apple II, although he reported that his children eventually tired of it because the graphics were no match for those in Japanese *famicon* units. The other ignored his son's interests and simply made 30 minutes of spelling work on a "Speak and Spell" mini computer unit part of their "homework" each night. Since the time of the survey (1990), a great deal more educational software with far more sophisticated graphics has become available. During a trip to the States last summer, my children and I found a wide range of software at the local public library. Although some was rather routine and made the children feel like they were doing school work after a while, others - for example, the *Carmen Sandiego* series for teaching social studies -proved captivating for me as well as my children. Certainly this is an avenue worth exploring once children have learned the basics of reading and are ready for more advanced work.

On a less technological level, memorization can also be an avenue to advanced vocabulary acquisition. Five of the parents in the survey were Baha'is who had their young children memorize prayers and passages from the Holy Writings. They noted that this facilitates reading later and prevents a fear of big or unknown words. Parents of any persuasion could choose passages of sacred texts, poetry or great literature and read them to their children daily until they had them memorized.

Many of the parents who taught reading and writing at the same time also gave creative writing assignments, having their children write poems, stories, letters to relatives and penpals, or, in one case, a summer diary similar to the one his children were assigned to do for Japanese school. Parents reported that these writing assignments, especially the diary, seemed to boost their children's reading performance.

Thus with a little creativity, parents can bring English reading and writing into their children's daily life in many ways that motivate their children to learn more.

Networking and Saturday Schools

No matter how inventive and efficient a teacher you may be, however, at times you may feel that teaching your own child to read a minority language is like battling windmills. Enlisting help and networking with other parents involved in the same task can minimize feelings of isolation.

One of the survey parents suggested enlisting the aid of relatives and friends back home to check out school and library sales for teaching materials or asking grandparents to send English books and workbooks as Christmas and birthday presents. A mother in the Tokyo area recommended the International Children's Bunko Association (ICBA), a group that arranges games, stories and activities for returnees and other English-speaking children throughout the country. She wrote that the group also has a lending library of English books. (For information, call 03-3496-8688 and leave a message or write to ICBA, 4-18 Uguisudani, Shibuya-ku, Tokyo 150.) Other groups around the country as well as a number of public libraries also lend books written in English. Moreover, Kyoto now has a support group of parents trying to teach their children to read. (For information, call Judy Taboshi at 0774-33-3664).

Two parents also pointed out that it is helpful for a child to have English-speaking playmates to reinforce oral skills, which in turn support literacy. Two other parents noted that if possible, getting another native speaker of English to teach is very helpful. Another said that he was in the process of setting up a "team teaching" system with an English-speaking parent/friend living in the same area. Although their children are not the same ages, both felt that the exposure to another "teacher" and the pressure of having unrelated children in the class would prove beneficial in making the children take their lessons seriously.

I myself reached a point where I was having increasing difficulty in continuing our home reading lessons. I was busy with my own work, and after my daughter Amy began second grade, she had more homework to do. We were often both tired and would end up "skipping" lessons for days on end. Fortunately, I had a friend, Kathy Yamane, who was facing similar problems with her daughter, who happens to be Amy's age. Kathy knew of another American mother with a daughter one year older than our girls, and also knew of an English conversation school which had a number of young foreign teachers. She arranged to have a young Australian woman who taught at the school come to her home to give reading lessons to the girls three Saturdays a month. Although it is a 40-minute drive one way for me, and probably takes at least 20 minutes for the other mother, we have kept up these lessons for more than three years now. During that time our first teacher left the country, and for about six months, we mothers took turns teaching the class ourselves before Kathy finally managed to arrange for another young woman, this one from Kenya, to take over the class. Kathy and I also have sons who are three years younger than our daughters. When the boys entered first grade in Japanese school, we invited another friend with a boy the same age to join a second class, which I teach in another room of Kathy's house at the same time that the girls' lesson is being given.

Although this is a major time commitment, all of the parents involved in this "Saturday school" have found it well worth while. We only meet three

times a month, arranging the schedule around our other commitments, but we all sit down after the lessons and agree on the amount of homework to be completed before the next lesson. This means that our children actually study three to four times a week on average. We find that peer pressure is far more effective than parental remonstrations in motivating the children to keep up with their reading and spelling (and keeping the parents going too!). In fact, the children even work over the summer vacation.

While the girls were going through their third grade texts, we also initiated a system of journal writing. At first, the girls would just write diary-type entries two or three times a week. Later, however, our second teacher started giving weekly composition assignments related to the reading work. The girls write these assignments in their journal and read them in class. They also write in their journals during the summer vacation, keeping nice personal records of their trips to the States and so on. This gives them constant practice in writing and a permanent reminder of their progress.

This "Saturday school", in addition to providing the peer pressure that keeps the children and parents working together during the week, also offers emotional support to the children and parents alike. Because the lessons are only an hour and are scheduled for Saturdays, the children usually have time to play together after they finish. Meanwhile, the mothers get a chance to talk. We are fortunate in that we are all good friends and have become closer because of this mutual commitment.

Many parents may not be blessed with families in similar positions nearby. Certainly, not all groups of parents would get along like we do. Martin Pauly, in his 1991 JALT presentation about the establishment of a Saturday school in the Tsukuba area, mentioned the problems that can arise because of different expectations and personality clashes among the parents. Nonetheless, because a Saturday school is such an effective means of supporting the development of biliteracy as well as offering bicultural children emotional support, I strongly recommend that English-speaking parents seriously explore the possibility of establishing one for their children if at all possible.

Chapter VIII: Concluding Remarks

In drawing to a close, I would like to summarize a few of the main points I have covered. First, the concept of reading is a difficult one for children to absorb. It generally takes a child living in a monolingual English environment nine months to a year to really understand how it works. English-speaking parents of bilingual children living in Japan therefore need to be patient. Don't expect your children to "get it" overnight, and don't become overly anxious if they are not reading at "peer level".

It is important to start teaching children in Japan to read English as early as possible, preferably before they learn to read Japanese, as the latter is much easier than English in the initial stages. You need to set up a fairly firm teaching schedule and be sure that you stick to it. Perseverance and belief in the ultimate importance of what you are doing are probably the most important factors in determining whether or not you will succeed.

At some point in your lessons, it is important to give your child basic

instruction in phonics, but don't overdo it. Be inventive and try to make your lessons as enjoyable and relevant as possible.

Most important, read to and with your children a lot. Help them experience the wonderful worlds reading can open up for them. Remember: reading is a precious gift - give it to your children with joy, and they're sure to be happy to receive it.

APPENDIX: Selected Suppliers of Teaching Materials*

Houghton Mifflin Company (School Textbooks)**
Wayside Road
Burlington, MA 01803-0939
TEL: (214)980-1100 FAX: (972)980-6814

Macmillan/McGraw-Hill (School Textbooks)
220 East Danieldale Road
Desoto, TX 75115
U.S.A.
TEL: (214)224-1111

Scholastic Book Clubs Inc. (Children's Books, School Textbooks and Resource Materials)
2931 E. McCarty Street
P.O. Box 7502
Jefferson City, MO 65102
U.S.A.
TEL: (573)636-8890

Sundance Publishing (wide selection of children's books)
234 Taylor Street
P.O. Box 1326
Littleton, MA 01460-9936
TEL: (508)486-9201/FAX: (508)486-1053

Notes

* Addresses and phone numbers were checked at the time this was written (July 1996), but changes may have occurred since that time.

** I have used the 1989 basal reading series from Houghton Mifflin and have found that it effectively incorporates all the major research findings on reading covered in this monograph, while also offering highly interesting materials. I highly recommend it as particularly effective for bilingual/bicultural children, who I feel would have more trouble meeting the demands of the Houghton Mifflin Literary Readers Series.

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Mary with her children, Amy and Dan

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